

*The 28th International Scientific Conference
“Educational Research and School Practice”*

**THE STATE
PROBLEMS
AND NEEDS
OF THE MODERN
EDUCATION
COMMUNITY**

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

Editors

Jelena STEVANOVIĆ

Dragana GUNDOGAN

Branislav RANĐELOVIĆ



Российский университет
дружбы народов



ЗАВОД ЗА ВРЕДНОВАЊЕ КВАЛИТЕТА
ОБРАЗОВАЊА И ВАСПИТАЊА

Belgrade, 2022.

Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

28th International Scientific Conference
“Educational Research and School Practice”

**The State, Problems, and Needs
of the Modern Education
Community**

December 9th, 2022
Belgrade

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

Editors

Jelena STEVANOVIĆ
Dragana GUNDOGAN
Branislav RANĐELOVIĆ

PROGRAM BOARD

Chairwoman of the Program Board

Jelena Stevanović, PhD, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

Members

- **Mara Cotič, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Education, University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia
- **Olga Borisovna Mikhailova, PhD, Associate Professor**, The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, RUDN University, Moscow, the Russian Federation
- **Sergey Ivanovič Kudinov, PhD, Full Professor**, The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, RUDN University, Moscow, the Russian Federation
- **Branislav Randelović, PhD, Associate Professor**, Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Daniel Churchill, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
- **Vilmos Vass, PhD, Full Professor**, Budapest Metropolitan University, Budapest, Hungary
- **Nataša Vlah, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka, Croatia
- **Milan Pol, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
- **Djuradj Stakić, PhD, Professor Emeritus**, Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, USA
- **Snežana Marinković, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Education in Užice, University of Kragujevac, Užice, Serbia
- **Ana Pešikan, PhD, Full Professor**, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

- **Mile Srbinovski, PhD, Full Professor**, Institute for Environment and Health, South East European University, Tetovo, Republic of North Macedonia
- **Slobodanka Antić, PhD, Associate Professor**, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Tina Štemberger, PhD, Associate Professor**, Faculty of Education, University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia
- **Elizabeta Karalić, PhD**, Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Emilija Lazarević, PhD, Principal Research Fellow**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Nikoleta Gutvajn, PhD, Senior Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Slavica Ševkušić, PhD, Senior Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Milica Marušić Jablanović, PhD, Senior Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Dušica Malinić, PhD, Senior Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Jelena Stanišić, PhD, Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

ORGANIZATIONAL BOARD

- **Dragana Gundogan, PhD, Research Associate**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Marija Ratković, MA, Research Trainee**, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia
- **Iva Medojević, MA, PhD student**, Teacher Education Faculty, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

ORGANIZERS

The Institute for Educational Research (Belgrade, Serbia) in cooperation with the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska (Koper, Slovenia), the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, RUDN University (Moscow, the Russian Federation), and the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (Belgrade, Serbia).

Note. This book was funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-68/2022-14/200018).

.....
CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

37.091.:004(082)
37.018.43:004.738.5(082)
371.13(082)
37.091.33(082)

INTERNATIONAL Scientific Conference "Educational Research and School Practice" (28 ; 2022 ; Beograd)
The State, Problems, and Needs of the Modern Education Community : book of proceedings / 28th International Scientific Conference "Educational Research and School Practice", December 9th , 2022 Belgrade ; editors Jelena Stevanović, Dragana Gundogan, Branislav Randelović. - Belgrade : Institute for Educational Research, 2022 (Beograd: MC Most). - 255 str. ; 24 cm
Tiraž 50. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz tekst. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Registar.

ISBN 978-86-7447-161-6

- а) Информациона технологија -- образовање -- Зборници
- б) Школство -- Реформа -- Зборници
- в) Наставници -- Стручно усавршавање -- Зборници
- г) Настава -- Иновације -- Зборници
- д) Образовна технологија -- Зборници
- ђ) Учење на даљину -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 84360457
.....

COPING STRATEGIES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SERBIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹⁷

Marija Stojanović¹⁸

Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Branislava Popović-Ćitić

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Lidija Bukvić Branković

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Marina Kovačević-Lepojević

Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Introduction

In a relevant study (Johnson *et al.*, 2005), out of 26 different professions, six occupations emerged as the most stressful (ambulance workers, teachers, social service workers, customer service representatives – call center operators, prison officers, and police officers), and teaching has a prominent place among them. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the sources of teacher stress have become significantly more numerous. To cope with stress, people use different strategies. Coping is an action directed at the resolution or mitigation of a problematic situation (Ray, Lindop & Gibson 1982). The literature generally distinguishes between coping strategies, aimed

¹⁷ *Note.* This research was funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-68/2022-14/200018).

¹⁸ E-mail: marija.stojanovic.ipi@rcub.bg.ac.rs

at solving problems, emotional regulation, and avoiding stressors. The use of coping strategies is an important determinant of teachers' psychological adjustment and well-being (Pyhältö *et al.*, 2020). For example, research has shown that an increased use of avoidant coping is associated with increasing levels of stress and a variety of negative emotions (anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness) (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 conversion to online, 2020).

This research aimed to identify the coping strategies that teachers used most often during the first semester of the school year of 2020/21 and to examine differences in the use of coping strategies in relation to certain socio-demographic characteristics of teachers (gender, age, and work place: primary or secondary education cycle).

Method

The research was carried out during the second semester of the school year of 2020/21. The data was collected on a voluntary basis through an online questionnaire, in the period from February to April 2021. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to the official e-mail addresses of all state primary schools in Serbia.

The questionnaire was filled out by 814 teachers (84.8% female) from different cities, municipalities, and settlements in Serbia (13.6% the City of Belgrade), aged between 23 and 64 ($M=45.56$, $SD=9.35$). The average number of years of work experience in education was 18.4 ($SD=9.83$), ranging from less than a year to 40 years. One third of our participants taught in a first education cycle (34.8%), while two thirds taught in the second education cycle. In the first semester of the school year of 2020/21, 26.8% of teachers had the experience of working exclusively according to the traditional model – teaching in the classroom (81.6% of whom taught in the first education cycle), 70.9% of teachers applied the combined model, while only nine teachers exclusively taught remotely.

Coping strategies were assessed using the Brief COPE instrument (Carver, 1997), translated into Serbian (Živanović & Vukčević Marković, 2019). The instrument comprises 28 items, all of which are rated on a four-point Likert-type scale. It measures 14 conceptually differentiable coping reactions, which can be further classified into

the above mentioned general coping styles: 1) Problem-focused coping: active coping, use of informational support, positive reframing, and planning; 2) Emotion-focused coping: emotional support, venting, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame; 3) Avoidant coping: self-distraction, denial, substance use, and behavioral disengagement (Hegarty & Buchanan, 2021). A high score on the Problem-Focused Coping scale indicates coping strategies aimed at changing the stressful situation. It is indicative of psychological strength, grit, and a practical approach to problem-solving and it is predictive of positive outcomes. A high score on the Emotion-Focused Coping scale indicates coping strategies aimed at regulating emotions associated with a stressful situation. A high score on the Avoidant Coping scale indicates physical or cognitive efforts to disengage from the stressor, while low scores are typically indicative of adaptive coping.

The data were processed using the methods of descriptive and inferential statistics (Cronbach's alpha, t-test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient for examining the correlation between two numerical variables).

Results and Discussion

Our data analysis showed that teachers most often used problem-focused coping, followed by emotion-focused coping and, avoidant coping as the least common style (Table 1). The distribution of responses to the 14 subscales (coping reactions) revealed that teachers most often resorted to acceptance ($M=3.68$; $SD=0.51$), planning ($M=3.27$; $SD=0.71$), active coping ($M=3.15$; $SD=0.79$), and self-distraction ($M=3$; $SD=0.91$). The least represented coping reactions among teachers were substance use ($M=1.08$; $SD=0.31$), behavioral disengagement ($M=1.45$; $SD=0.67$), denial ($M=1.69$; $SD=0.82$), and self-blame ($M=1.87$; $SD=0.73$). These findings are in line with the results of previous research (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2020; Rajesh *et al.*, 2022) indicating that teachers are more prone to positive coping reactions.

Table 1. *Coping Styles and Coping Reactions of Primary School Teachers (N=814)*

	M	SD	α	t test (gender)	Pearson correlation (age)	t test (work place)
Problem-Focused Coping	3.02	0.56	0.8	-1.45	0.03	1.54
Active coping	3.15	0.79		-0.47	0.07*	2.52*
Use of informational support	2.52	0.74		-1.15	-0.06	-1.55
Positive reframing	3.14	0.76		-2.3*	0.01	1.6
Planning	3.27	0.71		-0.51	0.08*	1.89
Emotion-Focused Coping	2.59	0.42	0.66	-2.97**	-0.06	-1.11
Emotional support	2.99	0.85		-2.11*	-0.12**	-1.33
Venting	2.61	0.73		-5.73**	0.04	0.87
Humor	2.23	0.85		1.52	-0.01	-1.62
Acceptance	3.68	0.51		-3.16**	0.08*	2.55*
Religion	2.17	1		-1.61	-0.11**	-1.28
Self-blame	1.87	0.73		0.42	0.01	-1.14
Avoidant Coping	1.81	0.43	0.65	-2.4*	0.14**	1.92
Self-distraction	3	0.91		-4.72**	0.08*	2.34*
Denial	1.69	0.82		-0.11	0.1*	2.34*
Substance use	1.08	0.31		3.35**	0.03	-1.43
Behavioral disengagement	1.45	0.67		-1.16	0.12**	-0.55

**significant at the 0.01 level

*significant at the 0.05 level

Further, the results showed that female teachers used emotion-focused coping ($t=-2.97$; $df=808$; $p<0.01$) and avoidant coping ($t=-2.40$; $df=808$; $p<0.05$) more often than male teachers. More specifically, significant gender differences in favor of female teachers were found in the results on positive reframing ($t=-2.30$; $df=807$; $p<0.05$), emotional support ($t=-2.11$; $df=807$; $p<0.05$), venting ($t=-5.73$; $df=806$; $p<0.01$), acceptance ($t=-3.16$; $df=805$; $p<0.01$) and self-distraction ($t=-4.72$; $df=808$; $p<0.01$). Conversely, male teachers more often resorted to substance use ($t=3.35$; $df=808$; $p<0.01$). The findings are consistent with the results of previous research showing that, compared to male teachers, female teachers more often use emotion-focused coping reactions (e.g., self-

distraction, emotional support, and venting) (Graves *et al.*, 2021) or avoidance coping (Pavlova *et al.*, 2022).

Our analysis further showed a weak positive correlation between teachers' age and their scores on the Avoidant Coping scale ($r=0.14$, $p<0.01$). Observing all coping reactions, older teachers more often chose active coping ($r=0.07$, $p=0.05$), planning ($r=0.08$, $p<0.05$), acceptance ($r=0.08$, $p<0.05$), self-distraction ($r=0.08$, $p<0.05$), denial ($r=0.10$, $p<0.05$), and behavioral disengagement ($r=0.12$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, younger teachers more often relied on emotional support ($r=0.12$, $p<0.01$), and religion ($r=-0.11$, $p<0.01$). Previous research has shown similar findings. For example, Carton & Fruchart (2014) found that new teachers tended to seek social support, whereas their more experienced colleagues were inclined to choose avoidance and confrontation strategies, demonstrating lower levels of self-control.

Teachers did not differ in their use of the three general coping styles depending on the education cycle in which they taught. However, when looking at the 14 individual coping reactions, first-cycle teachers more often used active coping ($t=2.52$; $df=800$; $p<0.05$), acceptance ($t=2.55$; $df=654.62$; $p<0.05$), self-distraction ($t=2.34$; $df=801$; $p<0.05$), and denial ($t=2.34$; $df=799$; $p<0.05$) compared to second-cycle teachers. These differences could have stemmed from differences in work modality. Namely, first-cycle teachers mostly implemented the traditional teaching model through direct work with students in the classroom, while second-cycle teachers mostly implemented the combined model.

Conclusion

The main limitations of this research include the predominantly female sample, the inability to compare the use of coping strategies before and during the pandemic, and the lack of examination of correlates/predictors and implications of coping strategies. Nonetheless, our results revealed that during the first semester of the school year of 2020/21, teachers used positive coping strategies to the greatest extent. That said, the use of negative coping strategies was not negligible, especially among older teachers. This issue merits greater attention, bearing in mind the association of negative coping strategies with a worse well-being of teachers and the undesirable implications for

students' academic results and well-being. Examining this issue would provide valuable insights into how best to support teachers in situations of heightened stress. Finally, learning how to cope with stress is an invaluable skill that all teacher education programs should integrate as a fundamental professional competence (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020).

Keywords: primary school teachers, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, avoidant coping.

References

- Carton, A. & Fruchart, E. (2014). Sources of stress, coping strategies, emotional experience: effects of the level of experience in primary school teachers in France. *Educational Review*, 66(2), 245–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.769937>
- Carver, C. S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the brief cope. *International journal of behavioral medicine*, 4(1), 92–100.
- Graves, B. S., Hall, M. E., Dias-Karch, C., Haischer, M. H. & Apter, C. (2021). Gender differences in perceived stress and coping among college students. *PLoS One*, 16(8), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255634>
- Hegarty, D. & Buchanan, B. (2021). *The Value of NovoPsych Data—New Norms for the Brief COPE*. NovoPsych. <https://novopsych.com.au/news/the-value-of-novopsych-data-new-norms-for-the-brief-cope/>
- Johnson, S., Cooper, C., Cartwright, S., Donald, I., Taylor, P. & Millet, C. (2005). The experience of work-related stress across occupations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20(2), 178–187. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940510579803>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T. & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions. *System*, 94(102352), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102352>
- Pavlova, A., Marakshina, J., Vasin, G., Ismatullina, V., Kolyasnikov, P., Adamovich, T., Malykh, A., Tabueva, A., Zakharov, I., Lobaskova, M. & Malykh, S. (2022). Factor structure and psychometric properties of Brief COPE in Russian schoolteachers. *Education Sciences*, 12(8), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12080539>
- Pyhältö, K., Pietarinen, J., Haverinen, K., Tikkanen, L. & Soini, T. (2021). Teacher burnout profiles and proactive strategies. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 36(1), 219–242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-020-00465-6>

- Rajesh, C., Ashok, L., Rao, C. R., Kamath, V. G., Kamath, A., Sekaran, V. C., Devaramane, V. & Swamy, V. T. (2022). Psychological well-being and coping strategies among secondary school teachers: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 11(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1248_21
- Ray, C., Lindop, J. & Gibson, S. (1982). The concept of coping. *Psychological Medicine*, 12(2), 385–395. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291700046729>
- Živanović, M. & Vukčević Marković, M. (2019). *Repository of psychological instruments in Serbian [Repozitorijum psiholoških instrumenata na srpskom jeziku] Repository of psychological instruments in Serbian [Repozitorijum psiholoških instrumenata na srpskom jeziku] (REPOPSI)/Brief-COPE*. <https://osf.io/7huz8>